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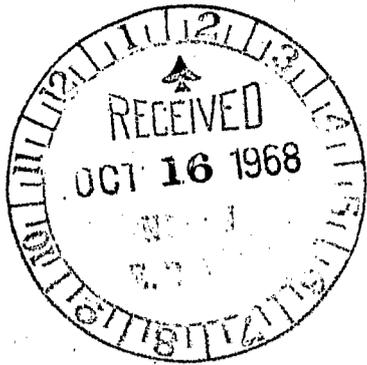
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Submission to the electorate of proposed bond issues is a method widely used in the United States at the local school district level to raise large sums of capital. While containing varied suggestions and recommendations of methods and processes for districts to use in attaining their proposals, the literature for the most part encourages lay group participation, in order to involve as many people as possible in the activity. This paper presents a study of role perceptions by 195 Iowa superintendents of the various groups and individuals (superintendent, superintendent-board, board, lay committee, and consultants) involved in bond elections. The results do not support the contention that involvement of large numbers of individuals increases the probability of bond passage. As perceived by the superintendents, a cooperative effort between the superintendent and the board of education was the most effective method of ensuring school bond passage. (DK)



**ROLE PERFORMANCE OF SELECTED INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS
IN SCHOOL BOND ELECTIONS**

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**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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IN SCHOOL BOND ELECTIONS*

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ABSTRACT A great deal of literature is available on the necessity of involving as many people as possible in bringing about community change. A specific kind of community change involving many people is a school bond election to secure large capital funds for improvement of school facilities. Often impressionistic descriptive articles stress the importance of involving community members on lay committees formed to help legitimize and pass these school bond issues.

This article examines the superintendent's perceptions of the relative importance of himself, the lay committee, the board of education, the importance of professional consultants and the combined efforts of the board and the superintendent. All perceptions in this article are those of the superintendents of 195 Iowa school districts.

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INTRODUCTION

Raising school district funds for large capital outlays is often accomplished by submitting a bond issue proposal to the district electorate. This method of obtaining money at the local level is widely used in the United States, although some individuals criticize it as obsolete and inefficient.¹ Yet, this method continues as the most widely used. Money obtained in this manner may be used for locally sponsored projects, in conjunction with federal and/or state funds and, because of a supreme court ruling, may be used for many purposes.² Usually the vote involves permission to sell school bonds for large sums of money at the prevailing interest rate. Some method of assessing the current financial status of the district is needed for presentation to the district electorate. A tax increase is not necessary in all school bond elections, but most districts are not in a financial position to borrow large sums of money without increasing the current tax rate. An increased millage often is the target of opposition to the school bond issue, even though most individuals and groups would not want to "go on record" as opposed to education in general. Opposition, if formed, usually is directed at specific issues; e.g., site disputes, disagreement over building architecture, etc.

This introductory section has attempted to show that the social processes called school bond elections are relatively complex social processes at the community decision-making level. A number of tasks must be performed as a campaign strategy is evolved. This article will examine the perceived importance of selected groups and individuals in the performance of seven tasks in a school bond election.

GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED

The literature contains articles centering on the importance of specific groups and individuals in bringing about the successful culmination of a school bond issue proposal. Often these articles mention the importance of the superintendent, the board of education, professional consultants, the students and lay committees. MacDonald goes so far as to specify the behavior patterns that should be manifested by these groups to assure passage of the school bond issue.³ Still others specify the strategy and communications techniques that should be used to pass a school bond issue.⁴ The literature is confusing on what techniques and strategy should be used in a school bond campaign. Generally these articles contain isolated fragments of the total picture, and are discussed in terms of a single district for a specific election. These limited impressions and small sample size (usually 1 case) do not deter many writers from generalizing to other districts nor from presenting checklists of things to do to assure school bond issue passage. A brief description of the role of each group or individual follows.

School Board

The school board is seen as an agency of legitimation by Norman D. Kerr. He suggests that the board members are elected to represent the various segments of the community, but he argues that the school board members legitimize

"...the policies of the school system of the community, rather than 'representing' the various segments of the community to the school administration, especially with regard to the educational program."⁵

Others see the board of education as instrumental in providing leader-

ship to the community and as a bridge between divided community sentiments on bringing about school improvement. Rushing reported that school board members should provide this leadership in conjunction with the community leadership.⁶

Lay Committees

The use of lay committees in school bond elections is an often-discussed subject in the literature. Although there is general disagreement on the nature and function of these committees, there is accord in principle; that the committee serves a "necessary" function.⁷ O'Leary says the committee must have unlimited access to information and freedom to research other school systems on similar problems. "The lay committee is an excellent sounding board of community opinion," emits from a community study in Michigan where 18 school bond issues were successfully passed and none rejected in an 11-year period!⁸

Professional Consultants

Professional consultants have been used in school bond elections by some school districts for many years. Fox reports that some districts have used consulting services for more than 40 years.⁹ He says,

"Educational consultants do not see themselves as people with all the answers, telling school boards and administrators what kind of building is best for them. Rather, they realize that schoolbuilding requirements are rooted in local problems, and a good school is, among other things, one that leaves no local need unsatisfied."¹⁰

Fox has outlined the role of the consultant as that of a resource person who can relieve the board of education and the school administration of decision-making in areas in which they are not competent; e.g., "interpreting the proposed building plan and its costs to the patrons."¹¹

In "The Role of the Educational Consultant," Lawson describes how the educational consultant can help the school officials and the architect achieve the best possible school facilities.¹²

No distinction has been made in this study as to the specific area in which the consultant has been used, but whether consultants were utilized in some phase of the school bond election.

The Superintendents

The superintendent's role in a school bond election is a central one, whether he has initiated the "need" for new facilities or aided in fulfilling the desires of those who seek new facilities for the community.¹³ Support for both these positions can be found in the literature. Opinions on what the superintendent's role should be have been rendered by superintendents, board members and lay leaders in the community. Not all superintendents agree on what their role should be. Further, this lack of consensus is evident when lay committee members, board members, etc., give their views of the superintendent's role in school bond elections. In most instances, it is difficult for a superintendent to remain neutral in something with such far-reaching community consequences as a school bond election. In this study, the superintendents appear to have had a major role in the elections, and the data will indicate the relative importance of the superintendent position to other groups actively seeking passage of the school bond issue.

Superintendent-Board of Education

The joint term superintendent-board of education is used because some decisions may require joint efforts by a combination of these two positions, and often the board will make strong allowances for the

superintendent to present his opinion to the board. Where this joint action is noted, the hyphenated term "superintendent-board" will be used. Any other use will refer to them individually or in agreement on a position, but not through joint action.

Various educators' positions have been presented on the importance of the school board, the lay committee, professional consultants, and the superintendent in bringing about the passage of a school bond election. The relative importance of each of these individuals or groups in seven task areas is examined in this study.

TASK AREAS

Responsibilities may be assumed by various groups and individuals for a number of tasks that usually are performed in planning a school bond proposal. However, the tasks examined here are judged to be central and include: 1) evaluation of the present education program, 2) survey of the present building facilities, 3) determination of school building needs, 4) selection of an architect, 5) selection of a building site, 6) designing and planning the proposed building and 7) planning the financing of the building program. The responsibility assumed by each of the following was evaluated for the seven tasks: superintendents of schools, the board of education, board-superintendent joint responsibility, citizens' lay committee, and professional consultants, which include the department of public instruction.

METHODS

Collection of the Data

The names of the school districts involved in school bond elections in Iowa between January 1, 1960, to December 31, 1964, were obtained principally from secondary sources. Information forms were mailed to

all county superintendents and to all high school principals. From these sources, a list was compiled that showed that 209 districts had held 364 elections on 241 different bond proposals during the five years. Additional restrictions were that the district must have maintained a public high school, junior high school, or a community college, and the bond proposal had to be presented for educational or related purposes. The population included all school districts in Iowa that had held school bond elections during the five years and met the criteria.

A questionnaire was constructed and mailed to the superintendent of each school district that had held an election. A total of 195 of the 209 school superintendents responded, for 93 percent return from districts eligible. This analysis is based on the responses from the 195 reporting districts.

The data reported in this project represent the perceptions of the superintendents following the elections. No attempt has been made to evaluate these perceptions with those of other observers, nor have the researchers placed any evaluation on whether the perceptions were accurate or inaccurate. They are presented only as perceptions.

The perceptions used in this analysis pertain to the last reported election. In some districts, as many as nine elections had been held for a single issue during the five years. This article centers on the most recent issue. The superintendents rated the responsibility assumed by each group for each task on a 0-9 continuum. Thus, 9.0 is the highest possible mean for a group for any task.¹⁴

Statistical Analysis

The basic statistical method used is analysis of variance testing of differences between the perceived performance of the five groups and

individuals in the seven specified task areas. This test produces three effects: 1) main effect between tasks, 2) main effect between groups, and 3) a residual interaction effect. This test considers the attributed importance of each category of groups and individuals for each task.¹⁵

It does not examine differences between the districts that were successful and those that were unsuccessful in their issue attempts. The successful-unsuccessful district differences in evaluation of task performance were examined by differences of means tests. The means for each group task evaluation (35 means) are presented for all districts, then separated on the pass-fail dichotomy (70 means) for an examination of differences (if any) between the perceptions of superintendents in successful issue districts and those in unsuccessful districts.¹⁶

FINDINGS

Data presented in Table 1 show that the superintendent and the board of education were rated as far more important than the lay committees

(Insert Table 1)

and the professional consultants. This finding was not in accord with individuals presenting prerequisites for school bond issue passage. Committees and consultants were rated very high by most of these writers. The data may not be directly comparable because the articles mentioned in the introductory section were not presented in a comparative framework. Hence, these evaluations of importance could have been in addition to instead of in lieu of the superintendent's role.

The ratings presented for each group for each task considered the importance of the superintendent and the board of education indi-

vidually; then an evaluation was made of their collective importance relative to each task. Clearly the superintendent-board together occupy the most important position of responsibility in most task areas.

An examination of the grand mean scores for all groups indicates that the joint superintendent-board of education category was perceived as assuming the most responsibility in the school bond campaigns (mean score 6.76). This combination was evaluated the highest in six of the seven tasks examined. Both the superintendent alone and the board of education alone were seen as quite important in assuming responsibility across all task areas. The total means were 5.79 for superintendents and 5.77 for the boards of education. The grand mean scores for the lay committees (2.13) and for the professional consultants (1.94) were considerably smaller than those involving the superintendents and the boards of education. The evaluation of educational programs task was rated the highest in terms of responsibility assumed in most cases. This was not totally anticipated since many problems encountered in passing school bond issues center on the determination of the additional building needs, the selection of the building site, and the building design.

Looking at the mean score for each task, it becomes obvious that there wasn't as much perceived variance between the difference in responsibilities assumed in task areas as between the groups and individuals. The range of mean values for tasks was 5.44 to 3.50 which was not as great as the range between groups, 6.76 to 1.94. The following conditions could explain the mean scores for the task areas, 1) a dispersal of responsibility over all groups could produce

a lower mean value, or 2) some groups could be virtually eliminated from performance in the task. Both conditions can be noted in Table 1. The lay committee and the professional consultants were virtually devoid of responsibility in the selection of the architect. All groups had somewhat lower mean values in the task, selection of site, which is probably due to the fact that there was no decision made in many cases due to adding on wings or remodeling existing structures.

The preceding discussion examined mean values for groups and individuals over each of the seven task areas. The question remains, is there a significant effect due to A (group differences), B (task differences) and AB, an interaction effect between the two variates. Table 2 shows the series of sums of squares, degrees of freedom, mean squares, F-ratios and significance levels.

(Insert Table 2)

All three F-ratios were significant beyond the .001 level. Obviously, most of the variance has resulted from the differential evaluation of the responsibility assumed between groups. The superintendent and the board of education are thought to be quite instrumental positions in any school-community relationship. Hence, it is not surprising that these findings indicate that these two positions, individually and in combination, were perceived to be most important in all tasks necessary in a school bond campaign strategy.

The literature presented earlier relating to involvement of lay committees in school bond and community elections favors the use of these committees. There was a lack of consistency on who should compose the committee, how many individuals should be on this committee, and what the function of the committee should be. However, the general

principle of the utilizing committees is widespread among educators and is generally accepted. Along with this acceptance is the belief that involving as many people as possible, not only is the proper thing to do, but also insures passage of the issue. Some opposing evidence is available, but the general theme of the literature presented is that the lay committee (whatever the composition or function) serves as a legitimizing agency in bringing accord to the various factions represented by the diverse committee members. Sociologists and community action workers have long recognized that it is easier to obtain accord among few members of a committee than among the diverse population of the district.

In this study, the evaluation of the importance of the lay committee did not substantiate this position. It remains to be seen if there were differential evaluations of the five groups and individuals when they are examined in terms of passage or failure of the most recent issue.

Ultimately, the concern of educators in school bond elections centers on the outcome of the issues. The outcome of 195 school bond elections was examined in this study. One-hundred-fifty-four (79 percent) of these districts successfully passed their last issue and the remaining 41 (21 percent) failed. The unsuccessful election districts were most likely to engage in several elections during the five years of study. Few elections were held, defeated, and forgotten. Most were presented again, often less than one month after defeat. Often, when quickly represented, these issues were defeated by a much larger margin. One district held nine unsuccessful bond elections during the five years.

The evaluations presented in Table 1 have been separated into a pass-fail dichotomy based on the 60-percent favorable vote needed for issue success. Means were recomputed by using this dichotomy for each group (pass-fail) for each task area. The resulting comparisons are presented in Table 3. Some trends are evident.

(Insert Table 3)

There are some significant differences between the perceptions of the successful and unsuccessful district superintendents. Two of these differences are in the initial task, evaluation of the education program. In both significant differences, the evaluation was lower in the district where the issue failed. Both the superintendent and the board of education were rated significantly lower in the districts where the elections failed than in districts where the elections were successful. Although the differences are not statistically significant, both the lay committee and professional consultants were rated higher in the districts that failed to pass their issues. The third significant difference indicates that the lay committee rated significantly higher in the unsuccessful districts. This difference was in perceived responsibility assumed in the survey of the present building facilities.

Although not statistically significant, the sum of evaluations assigned to the groups and individuals by the superintendents of successful and unsuccessful districts may be worth note. Eighteen of the 21 mean values assigned to the superintendent, board of education and joint superintendent-board of education were higher in the successful election districts than in the unsuccessful election districts. This tendency to assign higher scale values where the issue had passed did

not carry over to values assigned to the lay committee and the professional consultants. For these categories 12 of the 14 mean values were higher in the districts where the issue had failed.

These differences may have interesting implications, but that they are not significantly different should be kept in mind. It is possible, however, to look at differences that might have been expected, but were not found. Most people writing in the field suggest that involving as many people as possible is a good practice in gaining community support. A school bond election is a form of community decision-making, and the rather low evaluations given the lay committee does not support this position in the evaluations given by the superintendents responding in this study. A further anomaly is the lower evaluations assigned these positions by superintendents in successful districts. The data do not permit further explanation as to why the lay committee and consultants were rated lower in the successful districts nor why the superintendents generally rated themselves and the board of education higher in districts where the bond issue passed. No causal relationship is suggested that more democratic superintendents were more likely to experience failure in their school bond issues. However, the procedural problem of identification with successful elections and disclaimers on unsuccessful issues should not be overlooked.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Superintendents of districts that had sought funds through school bond elections evaluated the importance of the role played by themselves and four other groups and individuals in these elections. The evaluation was couched in terms of how much responsibility was assumed by the incumbents of each of these five positions in each of seven distinct task areas.

Responsibility assumed considered to what degree various individuals and groups were involved in the task areas. Again, the response indicated the evaluation of the superintendent. His responses are perceptions of the part played and responsibility assumed by each group in each of seven task areas. The superintendents rated the importance of the groups on a 0 - 9 scale, with categories from "no" responsibility, 0, to "very much" responsibility, 9. The superintendents differed in their perceptions of the value of the board of education and their own (superintendent's) responsibility assumed in the task areas. The superintendents and the boards of education individually and jointly were perceived to have been much more important than the lay committees and professional consultants. This higher evaluation extended across all seven task areas.

The responsibilities assumed in the evaluation of the present educational program were rated highest of the seven tasks. There wasn't as much perceived variance in the role performance between tasks as there was between the positions being evaluated in this report. The range of mean values for tasks was 5.44 to 3.50, which was not as great as the range in individual and group means, 6.76 to 1.94. This difference in position means was manifested in highly significant analysis of variance F-ratios. The two-way analysis of variance produced two main effects and one residual interaction effect. The effects between groups, between tasks, and the interaction effect all were significant.

A significant difference between the successful and the unsuccessful superintendents' evaluations was found in the responsibility assumed by the combined superintendent-board of education category in "designing and planning the proposed buildings." The superintendents of successful

districts rated themselves as "very important" in this task area. The superintendent-board of education responsibility was not the highest ranking of the groups, but it was the only evaluation that contained significant differences between the successful and the unsuccessful districts. More of the successful superintendents rated this combination as very important in this task.

The superintendents of districts that had passed their bond issues did not extend their favorable ratings to all individuals and groups examined in this study. The superintendents whose issues had failed rated professional consultants and lay committees higher than they were rated in districts that passed their issue. Even though 12 of 14 evaluations were in this direction, only one of these differences was significant at the .05 level.

Clearly cooperative effort of the superintendents and the board of education was perceived as the most important of the five groups in responsibility and importance in the bond election. The literature presented earlier in the article indicated that the use of a citizens' advisory committee was essential in passing the bond election. The data collected in this report do not support this position. Insights into whether the support of a lay committee provides the added impetus for success are not possible due to the limitations of the data.

Table 1. Superintendent's Perception of Responsibility Assumed by Various Individuals and Groups in Selected Task Areas in School Bond Elections*

Task	Evaluation of educational program	Survey of present building facilities needs	Determination of school building needs	Selection of Architect	Selection of site	Designing and planning proposed buildings	Planning the financing of the building program	Total Mean
Groups and Individuals	\bar{X}	\bar{X}	\bar{X}	\bar{X}	\bar{X}	\bar{X}	\bar{X}	\bar{X}
Superintendent	7.24	6.71	6.31	4.28	4.19	5.73	5.62	5.79
Superintendent-Board of Education	7.25	6.59	7.09	6.45	5.91	6.73	6.84	6.76
Board of Education	6.59	5.83	5.91	5.92	5.27	5.06	5.37	5.77
Lay Committee	3.53	2.95	3.06	.33	1.80	1.82	.97	2.13
Professional Consultant	<u>2.38</u>	<u>2.42</u>	<u>2.40</u>	<u>.31</u>	<u>1.48</u>	<u>1.94</u>	<u>2.18</u>	<u>1.94</u>
\bar{X}	5.44	4.95	5.00	3.50	3.78	4.30	4.24	4.52

N = 195 Districts

* Means were computed on 0 - 9 rating by superintendents for each group for each task.

Table 2. Analysis of Variance - Ratios for Groups, Tasks and Interaction Effects

Variance Due to	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F - Ratio	Significance Level
A Groups	28031.839843750	4	7007.957031250	751.787109375	P < .001
B Tasks	2883.511718750	6	480.585205078	51.555358887	P < .001
AB Group-Task Interaction	1520.000732422	24	63.333358765	6.794163704	P < .001
Error	<u>63294.546875000</u>	<u>6790</u>	9.321729660		
Total	95729.937500000	6824			

N = 195

Table 3. Superintendent's Perception of the Responsibility of Various Individuals and Groups in Various Tasks in the School Bond Campaign by Election Outcome^a

Task	Evaluation of educational program		Survey of present building facilities		Determination of school building needs		Selection of architect		Selection of site		Designing and planning proposed buildings		Planning the financing of the building program		Total Mean	
	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail
Groups and Individuals	\bar{X}	\bar{X}	\bar{X}	\bar{X}	\bar{X}	\bar{X}	\bar{X}	\bar{X}	\bar{X}	\bar{X}	\bar{X}	\bar{X}	\bar{X}	\bar{X}	\bar{X}	\bar{X}
Superintendent	7.43	6.54*	6.84	6.20	6.29	6.39	4.44	3.66	4.30	3.78	5.89	5.15	5.69	5.32	5.91	5.36
Superintendent and Board of Education	7.30	7.05	6.55	6.76	7.18	6.76	6.53	6.27	6.14	5.07	6.80	6.49	6.97	6.34	6.85	6.46
Board of Education	6.85	5.61**	5.88	5.66	5.91	5.93	6.06	5.36	5.29	5.20	5.15	4.73	5.39	5.29	5.86	5.46
Lay Committee	3.43	3.90	2.69	3.93*	2.93	3.56	.32	.36	1.82	1.73	1.82	1.83	.97	1.00	2.06	2.40
Professional Consultant	<u>2.28</u>	<u>2.78</u>	<u>2.27</u>	<u>2.95</u>	<u>2.25</u>	<u>2.98</u>	<u>.35</u>	<u>.17</u>	<u>1.38</u>	<u>1.88</u>	<u>1.86</u>	<u>2.27</u>	<u>2.03</u>	<u>2.73</u>	<u>1.84</u>	<u>2.32</u>
\bar{X}	5.50	5.22	4.89	5.15	4.96	5.17	3.59	3.21	3.83	3.58	3.35	4.14	4.26	4.18	4.55	4.44

^a Difference of means tests computed for 35 cells

N = 195

* Significant at .05 level

** Significant at .01 level

Footnotes

- ¹Oscar T. Jarvis, "Experts Survey Financing School-Building Programs," American School Board Journal, Vol. 148, No. 1 (January 1964); John Allen Smith, "An Appraisal of School Bond Campaign Techniques," Southern California Education Monographs, No. 15, Los Angeles: University of Southern California Press, 1953.
- ²Stephen F. Roach, "Boards and Bond-Issue Elections," American School Board Journal, Vol. 128, No. 5 (June 1954) p. 35.
- ³B. I. MacDonald, Jr., "How to Win Bond Issues and Influence Voters," The School Executive, Vol. 74 (April 1955) pp. 60-63.
- ⁴The following articles are examples of those presenting techniques to employ in a school bond issue campaign. Robert R. Denny, "Selling Bonds," American School Board Journal, Vol. 139 (November 1959); Robert R. Denny and John H. Harris, "Active Citizen's Committee Wins School Bond Election," American School Board Journal, Vol. 149, No. 3 (September 1964) pp. 21-22; Clifford F. Holler, "A Successful School Bond Election," American School Board Journal, Vol. 132, No. 4 (April 1956) p. 32; B. I. MacDonald, Jr., op. cit.; S. P. Marland, Jr., "Stowage, Mr. Superintendent," The School Executive, Vol. 70 (August 1951); E. J. O'Leary, "Garden City Reports Successful Bond and School Millage Elections," American School Board Journal, Vol. 148 (March 1964); Joe B. Rushing, "Involving the Community in School Planning," American School Board Journal, Vol. 141, No. 1 (July 1960).
- ⁵Norman D. Kerr, "The School Board as an Agency of Legitimation," Sociology of Education, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Fall 1964) p. 35.

- ⁶Rushing, op. cit., p. 18.
- ⁷J. H. Hull, "Merits and Difficulties of Lay Advisory Committees," American School Board Journal, Vol. 134 (March 1957) pp. 47-49.
- ⁸O'Leary, op. cit., p. 17.
- ⁹Willard Fox, "You Need a School Building Consultant," American School Board Journal, Vol. 148, No. 1 (1964) p. 52.
- ¹⁰Ibid., p. 52.
- ¹¹Ibid., p. 52.
- ¹²Douglas E. Lawson, "The Role of the Educational Consultant," American School Board Journal, Vol. 140, No. 4, p. 38.
- ¹³B. W. Terwinkle and J. Arthur France, "Citizens Promote a Building Program," American School Board Journal, Vol. 128, No. 5 (June 1954) p. 36.
- ¹⁴The complete development of the task responsibility, scoring techniques and differences between districts is presented in George M. Beal, Virgil Lagomarcino, John J. Hartman and Judith Murphy, Iowa School Bond Issues Data Book, Ames, 1966, Sociological Studies in Education, Report 58, Department of Sociology and Anthropology.
- ¹⁵Allen L. Edwards, Experimental Design in Psychological Research, Revised edition; New York, 1960, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, pp. 217-219.
- ¹⁶George W. Snedecor, Statistical Methods, Revised edition; Ames, 1956, Iowa State University Press, pp. 90-91.